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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ACCRA 000049

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TAGS: [GH](#) [PGOV](#) [GOG](#)

SUBJECT: GHANA'S PRESIDENT AND PARLIAMENT SWORN IN

Classified By: PolChief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.5 d and e.

¶11. (C) Summary: President John Kufuor was sworn in for a second term on January 7. His inauguration was delayed by several hours because of a tug-of-war over the selection of the new Speaker of Parliament, Ebenezer Sekyi Hughes. This showdown could sour relations for some time between the two major parties in parliament. We do not expect much policy or legislative momentum in the coming month, as politicians jockey for positions, the new parliament gets organized and new ministers and deputies are vetted through parliament.
End summary.

President Sworn In

¶12. (U) On January 7, John Agyekum Kufuor was sworn in for a second four-year term as President of Ghana. The inauguration was attended by the presidents of Senegal, Nigeria, Togo, Sierra Leone, Equitorial Guinea, Benin and Mali, the Prime Ministers of Angola, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, Interim Chairman of the Liberation Unity Government of Liberia Gyude Bryant, the Vice Presidents of South Africa and the Gambia, the Foreign Minister of Morocco, and other dignitaries (Ambassador Yates represented for the USG). In his inaugural speech, Kufuor highlighted the need for good governance, for increasing confidence in public institutions, and for boosting education and health care.

Parliament Off to a Bumpy Start

¶13. (U) The ceremony started almost three hours late because parliament, meeting just before the inauguration, could not reach consensus on the selection of a new Speaker. The ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) backed President Kufuor's choice of Ebenezer Begyina Sekyi Hughes, while the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) pushed for the reelection of outgoing Speaker Peter Ala Adjetey. In an unprecedented secret ballot (counted three times because of math errors),

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Hughes prevailed 134 votes to 96. Parliament retained Freddie Blay as First Deputy Speaker by consensus but then again disagreed over the choice of the largely ceremonial Second Deputy Speaker position. The NPP again prevailed in a secret ballot vote, with its winning candidate Malik Yakubu

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Al-Hassan (an NPP MP from Yendi, Northern Region). With these positions selected, the new Speaker swore in 230 new Members of Parliament.

Comment

¶14. (C) The GOG badly bungled the protocol of the inauguration and related events during the week, damaging Ghana's reputation for many visitors. At the inauguration, Heads of State and Ambassadors were left waiting for hours without explanation. Some Members of Parliament were left standing without seats (PolChief witnessed police threatening to beat VIPs if they did not vacate seats). Kufuor's aides forgot to bring the sheet of paper with the oath of office, forcing the President to repeat the words of the Chief Justice. VIP vehicles arrived and departed chaotically, with no protocol officers in sight. The suddenly arriving thick mist of hamattan season added to the atmosphere of confusion.

¶15. (C) Parliament is off to an inauspicious start. The selection of Speaker is usually decided before MP's come to vote. The secret ballot voting for both Speaker and Deputy Speaker was unprecedented. The results - two NPP choices and no one in leadership from the NDC - will likely sour relations between the two major parties in parliament. The election of Deputy Speaker Malik Yakubu Al-Hassan is controversial. Formerly Interior Minister, he resigned under pressure after the 2002 murder of the Ya Na (Dagbon Chief) in his home town. Speaker Hughes and First Deputy Speaker Blay are both from the Akan ethnic group. Their election reinforces the Akan identity of the Kufuor government (Kufuor and the Chief Justice are also Akans, but the Speaker has traditionally been a Ga.) This could eventually hurt the NPP's political support among other ethnic groups. We will provide a bio of the new Speaker septel.

16. (C) We do not expect much policy or legislative momentum in Ghana for at least the next month. Enthusiasm for Kufuor's second term could increase after his new ministers are in place. At the moment, however, politicians are busy jockeying for positions in the new government. There are currently no ministers (ministries are being run by Chief Directors). All new ministers will need approval from parliament, which will be absorbed in the coming weeks with forming committees and training (52 percent of MPs are new to parliament). The President is in Gabon for an AU Security Summit and, in the next few weeks, will host an ECOWAS Summit in Accra and attend an AU Summit in Addis Abbaba. He will likely begin to name Cabinet nominees within the next week, but parliamentary approval could take weeks. The President's priorities in early February will be the budget and his State of the Nation Address (Note: the President's January 4 State of the Nation address fulfilled, for the first time ever, a constitutional requirement that the President address parliament before the end of its session about his performance. The February State of the Nation address will fulfill another constitutional requirement that the President address parliament at the beginning of a session, and is likely to be more prospective than the January speech. End note.) The Parliament will adjourn by March 25 for six weeks. We will do more analysis over the coming weeks about what to expect from Kufuor's second term.

YATES